# CHRIST'S PROGRAM OF MISSIONS

No.
CONTINUATION COMMITTEE
North American Section
LIBRARY
4573

By

WILLIAM ASHMORE, D.D.

AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARY UNION, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

# Christ's Program *of* Missions

FOUR passages of Scripture set forth explicitly Christ's purpose and method in the propagation of the gospel throughout the world: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." . . . "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." . . . "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." . . . "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

## Two Great Missionary Campaigns

The plan thus outlined by the Master was carried out to the letter by the disciples. The book of Acts is a commentary on the eighth verse of the first chapter. It is taken up with an account of two great missionary campaigns: a Jewish campaign, and a Gentile campaign, which together covered the entire field of world operations. In the first campaign Peter, James and John were the leaders. They began in Jerusalem as they had been instructed to do. They were told to begin at Jerusalem, and they were to go forth from Jerusalem. Some of them would

have continued there, expecting to fight it out with the Pharisees and Sadducees for mastery in the old household. That, however, was not the purpose of God. A Jerusalem persecution broke out, in consequence of which the disciples were scattered abroad, and went everywhere preaching the Word, and so all Judea was speedily traversed. Then Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them. Thus was fulfilled the first part of the witnessing enjoined by Christ.

Then the Gentile campaign began, which was to continue the work to the uttermost part of the earth. In this campaign Barnabas, Paul and Silas were the leaders. The Holy Spirit said to the Gentile church at Antioch: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them." These apostles and their associates and successors went from town to town, from city to city, and from country to country. They never remained long in any one place, but were continually on the move. They planted and then passed on. In this way they did their work with such sufficiency that Paul could afterwards say: "From Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel"; and he could also add: "Having no more place in these parts." He then contemplated a journey to Spain, the end of the then civilized world.

## Some Principles Stated

It is in these compendious passages that several things are to be noted:

1. There is only one Great Commission, and that is the one to evangelize the world as a whole. The commission to evangelize

any one country must be derived from the general commission to evangelize the world at large. The whole is greater than any of its parts. The world is greater than any country in the world. The evangelization of any one state or province must be held subordinate and tributary to the evangelization of the world in its totality.

2. The divine plan was not for evangelists to wait until everybody, or nearly everybody, in a community was converted, nor yet until everybody, or nearly everybody, should have heard. If the church had waited in Jerusalem until Annas and Caiaphas or the Pharisees generally were converted, the regions beyond would never have had any gospel.

3. The divine plan makes a distinction between evangelizing and Christianizing. Paul did not say that great region in which he had operated had been fully Christianized, for that would not have been true. But he did say that it had been fully evangelized; that means that the gospel had been loudly and widely proclaimed among them; and also that witnessing churches had been planted at important points to continue the witnessing unto Christ after the apostles had moved on to other places. Evangelizing was the work of the apostles; Christianizing was the work of the pastors and teachers.

4. The divine plan recognizes a right of way to those who never have heard once, over those who have heard one hundred or five hundred times. "Let us go forth," said Christ, "into other towns and villages also, for, therefore, am I come forth."

5. The divine plan gives precedence to a country and to a people who have no means of grace whatever and no means of knowing

about a Saviour, — no Sabbaths, no churches, no Bibles, no Christians, over a country or a people, which is full to repletion, with plenty of churches, plenty of Bibles and plenty of Christian literature. There are great cities in China of over 100,000 people in which, if a dying man should wish to inquire about the great hereafter, he could find no one who could tell him. In America there is not a village even of 100 people in which, if a dying man would wish to hear about Christ, he could not find a score of his neighbors, ministers or deacons, who would tell him all about it.

6. The divine plan recognizes a distinction in missions. We hear it said sometimes that "missions are one." That is true, but missions also are many. Missionary purposes are the same, but missionary conditions and missionary methods greatly vary.

7. More than that, the distinction between home missions and foreign missions, which some say ought to be done away with, is a Bible distinction originating with the Holy Spirit, recognized and acted upon by the apostles. "When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen and they unto the circumcision." The Holy Ghost made Peter a home missionary and Paul a foreign missionary.

8. The divine plan does not favor anything like a merger between the foreign missions and home missions. When the Holy Spirit would start a foreign mission he did not organize it at Jerusalem, the old Jewish homestead, but at Antioch, quite a distance away, and a Gentile city. Paul, as the apostle of the Gentiles, refused to be "coordinate" with the mission to the Jews. He gave place to them by subjection not for an hour. They were cooperative, but not coordinate.

9. The divine plan does not start any discussion as to the comparative value of souls, or anything to favor the sentiment sometimes heard that an American soul is a much more valuable asset in the kingdom of God than a Fiji soul. It is not what *we* can do with converts, but what *God* can do with them.

10. The divine plan does not recognize that any one country on the face of the earth is necessary to help God out in his plans for the redemption of mankind. The early Christian Jews seemed to think they were, but they found they were not. God is not dependent upon America nor upon England. If they are faithful, then well; if unfaithful, God will take away their bishopric and give it to another. God who out of stones could raise up children unto Abraham can raise up witnesses unto Christ out of the Chinese, the Japanese and the Fijians.

---

LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARY UNION

BOSTON, MASS.

Sample copies free 25 cents per hundred

562-1 ED-15M-10-06